

VZCZCXRO1853
PP RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM RUEHNH RUEHTRO
DE RUEHGO #0454 1570847
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 050847Z JUN 08
FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7726
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1257
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 4797
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 8345
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 5907
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 3790
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1718
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 000454

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP AND IO; PACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/20/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [BM](#)
SUBJECT: BURMA: ZARGANAR ARRESTED

REF: RANGOON 434

Classified By: Pol Officer Sean O'Neill for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

11. (C) Summary. Police arrested comedian/activist Zarganar at his home the evening of June 4. Authorities said they will only hold him for two days, but did not specify the reason for his arrest. Zarganar has been engaged in relief efforts since Cyclone Nargis and had recently given a number of interviews to international media in which he criticized the regime's response to the disaster. End Summary.

12. (C) Authorities arrested comedian/activist Zarganar the evening of June 4. Zarganar's colleague, Zaw Thet Htwe, told us a team of special branch police and local ward authorities raided the activist's home at 8:00 p.m. last night. According to Zaw Thet Htwe, police searched Zarganar's home for over two hours and seized his computer, approximately \$1,300 in cash, and some documentary CD's of Cyclone Nargis. Police told Zaganar's sister-in-law that they would only detain him for two days. Authorities did not specify why Zarganar had been arrested. Prior to his arrest, Zarganar told us that he was working with 88 Generation Students leader Toe Kyaw Hlaing to deliver relief aid to cyclone affected areas (reftel). Additionally, Zarganar has given a number of recent interviews to international media in which he criticized government relief efforts.

13. (C) Comment. Zarganar is a former political prisoner, and was a key organizer of the September protests. He has been a visible and vocal critic of the regime for several years. His relief works since the cyclone, and those of other private individuals, stand in sharp contrast to the regime's callous response to the disaster. Though Zarganar's detention is likely an attempt by the regime to muzzle his public and vocal criticism of its slow and inept response to Cyclone Nargis, it also demonstrates the regime's continuing worries that relief efforts might be used to build political opposition to the regime. End Comment.
VILLAROSA